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**Review: Angelica Nuzzo (Hg.), Hegel and the Analytic Tradition,  
London/New York 2010**

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*Hegel and the Analytic Tradition*. EDITED BY ANGELICA NUZZO. (London: Continuum, 2010. Pp. vii + 208. Price £61.75.)

Talk of a 'Hegel Renaissance' within the analytic tradition has become almost commonplace. However, a closer look reveals that various Renaissances, in part incompatible, are in progress now (some of them are distinguished along rough geographical criteria: there is talk of Chicago Hegelians, Pittsburgh Hegelians, Münster Hegelians, etc.). Among the proponents of these various Renaissance movements there are very different views as to what it is about Hegel's philosophy that deserves to be revived in the current philosophical climate. In addition, the Hegel Renaissances tend to go along with a critical re-reading of the history of analytic philosophy itself: for instance, was the crucial break with Hegelianism at the dawn of the movement based on a simple misunderstanding on Moore's and Russell's part? Did they fail to distinguish Hegel's philosophy from the varieties of Hegelianism now grouped together under the heading of 'British idealism'? In all these respects the present volume promises some clarification. The editor's introduction says (p. 3) that it aims to be useful both 'with regard to the renewal of Hegel scholarship and with regard to the advancement of the current philosophical agenda'.

It comes as little surprise that the contributors to the volume agree that Hegel's philosophy deserves a renaissance. But what is this philosophy all about in the first place? In textbooks Hegel is usually classified as a proponent of 'absolute idealism', as opposed to Kant's 'subjective idealism' and Schelling's 'objective idealism'. Interestingly, the volume reflects a growing consensus that Hegel is not an idealist at all: according to Franca D'Agostini, Hegel is an idealist only in the almost truistic sense of a strictly philosophical idealism. This involves nothing more than 'the awareness that speaking philosophically of this or that particular thing is speaking of the *idealized* version of those things' (p. 146), and it is quite compatible with acknowledging a mind-independent world that provides the subject-matter for the sciences. The results of the sciences are then given the form of a system by philosophical thinking (cf. pp. 146–7).

Joseph Margolis, in 'The Point of Hegel's Dissatisfaction with Kant', diagnoses a 'recovery of realism' (p. 19) in Hegel as against Kant's transcendental project. However, it is a recovery that undergoes a 'pragmatist fragmentation' (*ibid.*): both reality itself and the *a priori/a posteriori* distinction in epistemology are thoroughly historicized as reflections of open-ended, non-teleological processes. In contrast, Tom Rockmore seems to disagree fundamentally with the realist consensus: according to him, the analytical renaissance of Hegel in its entirety goes wrong in interpreting

‘Hegel without idealism’ (p. 158). By discussing philosophers as diverse as Beiser, Brandom and Westphal, Rockmore tries to prove that the analytic Hegel inevitably turns out to be a metaphysical realist (understood as someone who tries to defend realistic common sense intuitions). Rather confusingly, however, Rockmore’s own reading of Hegel as an idealist construes him as an empirical *realist* (*sic* – cf. pp. 170–1). Empirical realism, as defined by Rockmore, in turn implies scepticism concerning knowledge of the external world; all knowledge has to be constructed on the basis of what is given in experience. Finally, Terry Pinkard identifies it as one of Hegel’s most important achievements that he lays to rest the realism/idealism dichotomy itself. This dichotomy is said to presuppose a scheme/content divide which Pinkard’s Hegel has once and for all overcome by relying on a deflationary, Wittgensteinian conception of historically evolving forms of life. Independently of the function they serve within such ongoing practices, philosophical terms of art simply make no sense, according to Pinkard’s Hegel.

It would take at least another *Phenomenology* just to sort out the various interpretations of the realism/idealism distinction at work in the volume. To make matters worse, most of these interpretations are mutually incompatible and highly idiosyncratic with regard to the usage familiar from contemporary analytic philosophy.

At this point, confused readers might look for some relief. They may find it, for instance, in David Kolb’s stimulating critique of the idea that Hegel’s *Logic* tries to establish a unique self-determining and final sequence of categories. Against this idea, Kolb points out that even crucial categories like ‘Form/Matter’ or ‘Form/Content’ are located at quite different places in the various versions of the *Logic* – which seems hard to reconcile with the idea that there is one unique place for them and that their location in the sequence is responsible for their very content. In the end Kolb opts for considering the *Logic* as ‘an assemblage of reusable chunks of insights’ (p. 57), which can and should be appropriated where it seems fit from the point of view of our own problems. This is a possible alternative to the rather pointless exchange of abstract labels which are meant to characterize Hegel’s project as a whole. In a similar vein, Katharina Dulkeit’s contribution compares Hegel’s and Putnam’s respective attempts at providing a theory of natural-kind terms. She not only uncovers crucial similarities in Putnam’s and Hegel’s approaches to the problem, but even reaches the conclusion that Hegel wins the day by delivering ‘where Putnam merely assumes’ (p. 129), i.e., by explaining how ostensive definition is possible.

Historical questions which deal with the break with Hegelianism as one of the crucial impulses of early analytic philosophy get very little attention in the volume. (But see Westphal’s contribution, which turns the tables on Russell and criticizes from a Hegelian perspective his theory of knowledge by acquaintance.) However, the volume stands out among similar publications by the attention almost all contributors pay to Hegel’s *Logic*. The *Logic* is the crucial work for an evaluation of Hegel’s system; but as is justly emphasized by the editor (cf. p. 61), it has received almost no attention from authors working in the analytical tradition, who still favour the *Phenomenology*. None the less the overall impression the reader gets from the volume is a rather sobering one: the dialogue between Hegel scholarship on the one hand and analytic philosophy still hovers uncomfortably between two extremes. On

the one hand, there are mere abstract assertions (and their denial) of the general superiority of the Hegelian project (without any consensus on the defining features of that project). On the other hand, there are piecemeal appropriations of isolated Hegelian arguments which hardly do justice to Hegel's repeated insistence on the holistic and organic nature of his philosophical system.

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